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AUTHOR Flanagan, Malcolm; Dunafon, Donna
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ABSTRACT

Missouri LINC Assistive Device Service is part of a state program to help vocational and special education teachers prepare special education students for employment. Assistive Device Services staff respond to requests from school personnel for information on sources for adaptive devices, publishers or distributors, and consultants on specific topics. Information is distributed throughout the state via newsletters, other publications, displays at conferences, and presentations to school staff and conference participants. A copy of the worksheet provided by the service to help school personnel clarify their needs is included. (CL)

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MISSOURI LINC ASSISTIVE DEVICE SERVICE

MALCOLM FLANAGAN
DONNA DUNAFON

ABSTRACT

Missouri LINC is a state funded project providing various support services to Missouri Vocational and Special Education teachers secondary who are teaching vocational skills to handicapped students in secondary and postsecondary institutions. These services include adaptive devices.

Missouri LINC Assistive Device Service is one component of a state funded technical assistance program that assists vocational and special education teachers in the preparation of special education students for employment. The assistive device service, however, is the one component that is designed for preschool through postsecondary school levels. The remaining services will be identified in order for the reader to understand the structure of the total program. Information Assistance includes the collecting and retrieval of resource materials, an incoming WATS line (in-state only), SpecialNet (MOLINC, a state electronic bulletin board and VOCED, a national electronic bulletin board), and booths at state meetings. This information dissemination includes assistive device information products as well as products from the program as a whole. Publications include bi-monthly newsletters, two page teacher-oriented publications with resource lists, and papers or manuals. The latter are designed to provide assistance with pressing issues. Consultation is available for a limited number of school districts per school year where LINC staff visit with school staff, on site, to assist in improving services. A plan is developed and followed by LINC staff. From consultations, two major activities have developed that have state-wide significance. Courses and Conferences range from credit courses to one and two day conferences. Transition to Work is a component new to the program in 1984. This component is being developed together with one public school district as a demonstration program. Entry Level Skills Criteria Project training is a major component

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for the 1984-85 school year. This is one of the components that grew out of consultative services. These entry level skills criteria, originally developed by area vocational-technical school instructors, and instructional materials, developed by special education instructors, have gained sufficient attention that approximately twenty percent of the school district staff in the state will be trained in their use during the development activities carried out each year in relationship to selected components.

Assistive Device Services

These services may be used by school district personnel with either the in-coming WATS line or Special-Net. When requests are made, staff ask a limited number of questions in order to clarify the needs of the student, they then research the request and provide information to school personnel. Services are informational only, as qualified professional specialists are not members of Missouri LINC staff. The information usually contains data about assistive device/adaptive sources for the purchasing equipment, lists of distributors in or near Missouri, and consultants who provide services for a fee. Conference presentations and workshops are available upon request by local education association staff or professional organizations. Commercial distributors have been especially cooperative in providing display equipment at all presentations when requested.

The largest number of requests have been for communication devices. Other areas where requests have been made in fairly large numbers are, computer access, enlarged print, and writing aids. Requests have also been made for devices to help transport students safely.

Because many people requiring our services have limited knowledge about the technology available to assist them, Assistive Device Service staff have attempted to help public school professionals (teachers, speech therapists, school administrator's) clarify their needs. A one-page worksheet that includes items for defining the handicapped individuals strengths and weaknesses, environmental considerations, and solutions as well as some practical matters such as portability and accessibility. The worksheet is included as Table 1 at the end of this article.

One of the most exciting endeavors Missouri LINC Assistive Device Services staff have been involved with is adopting a work station for a young woman with cerebral palsy. This young woman came to Missouri LINC in 1981 as a trainee in data entry work. She could not operate the keyboard in a conventional manner due to poor control. Keyboard modifications were, therefore, made. In 1983 the Assistive Device Service staff became involved with providing the most efficient input system for her. Exploration included evaluating voice recognition possibilities and scanning devices. These modes were rejected after a long evaluation. She is now using a new model of an adapted keyboard and a more practical head-stick. She is employed at Missouri LINC as a part-time Data Entry Operator I. Most of her job is performed independently. One function she still requires assistance with is placing floppy disks in disk drives. Research will continue until she is as nearly independent as our capabilities will allow. Copies are available at no cost.

Summary of Detailed Study and Summary of Research and Results

Missouri LINC Assistive Device Service is a low budget service designed to provide information to teachers and parents of exceptional children. Information is distributed throughout the state through newsletters, other publications, displays at conferences, and presentations to school staff and conference participants.

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ASSISTIVE DEVICE SERVICES
609 Maryland
University of Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, Missouri 65211
800/392-0533

Guidelines for Selecting and Locating Assistive Devices

Name_____Age_____

1. Define the problem._____

_____

_____

2. Possible Solutions
a)_____

b)_____

c)_____

3. What does the device need to do in order to best tap the strengths of the student?

_____

_____

_____

4. Target Area of Need. Check all appropriate areas:

_____Academic
_____Vocational
_____Recreational
_____Home
_____Other

*List specific settings that present problems.

_____

_____

5. Program Considerations

Yes	No	
___	___	Will modifications or adaptations effectively increase productivity?
___	___	Can adequate training time be provided for the introduction of the device?
___	___	Can staff be provided to carry out training?
___	___	Is there adequate space for the device?
___	___	Is accessibility a problem? Please specify.

_____

Other Concerns:_____

_____

6. Consult with Support Staff and others.
-Teachers
-Physical Therapist
-Occupational Therapist
-Parents
-Community Contacts

Do any of these people have ideas or materials available? (Many times, there is a wealth of talent in your own community for building your own device)

7. Contact other sources for additional information.

-Missouri LINC Assistive Device Services 1-(800)-392-0533
-Local medical/hospital supply companies
-Local Hospitals*Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy Depts.
-Rehabilitation Services
-State Department of Education-Consultants 1-(314) 751-4909
-Local Service Agencies:
Lions Club - Vision
Optimist Club - Hearing
Bell Telephone Pioneers - Engineering
Others...

8. Contact Distributors

*Have you explored the possibilites of hands-on experience? (Many companies will loan equipment for try out purposes for up to two weeks.)

*Invite the sales representative to come demonstrate the device with the student.

*Spend as much time as possible training on equipment to determine its effectivenesa.

9. Consider Cost and Contact Funding Sources

Have you contacted:
_____Insurance Companies
_____State Department
_____Local Service Agencies
_____Rehabilitation Services
_____Parents

10. Purchasing Equipment

What services are provided by the company?
_____Warranties guarantees
_____Local Representative for Servicing and Maintenance
_____Loan/Lease
_____Other Services

Is the device expandable in terms of its capability to "grow with the student".

*When purchasing microcomputer assistive devices, consider its ability to interface with either existing or other systems.
Prepared by:_____